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OLD · BOSTON
FOR · YOUNG ·
EYES ·

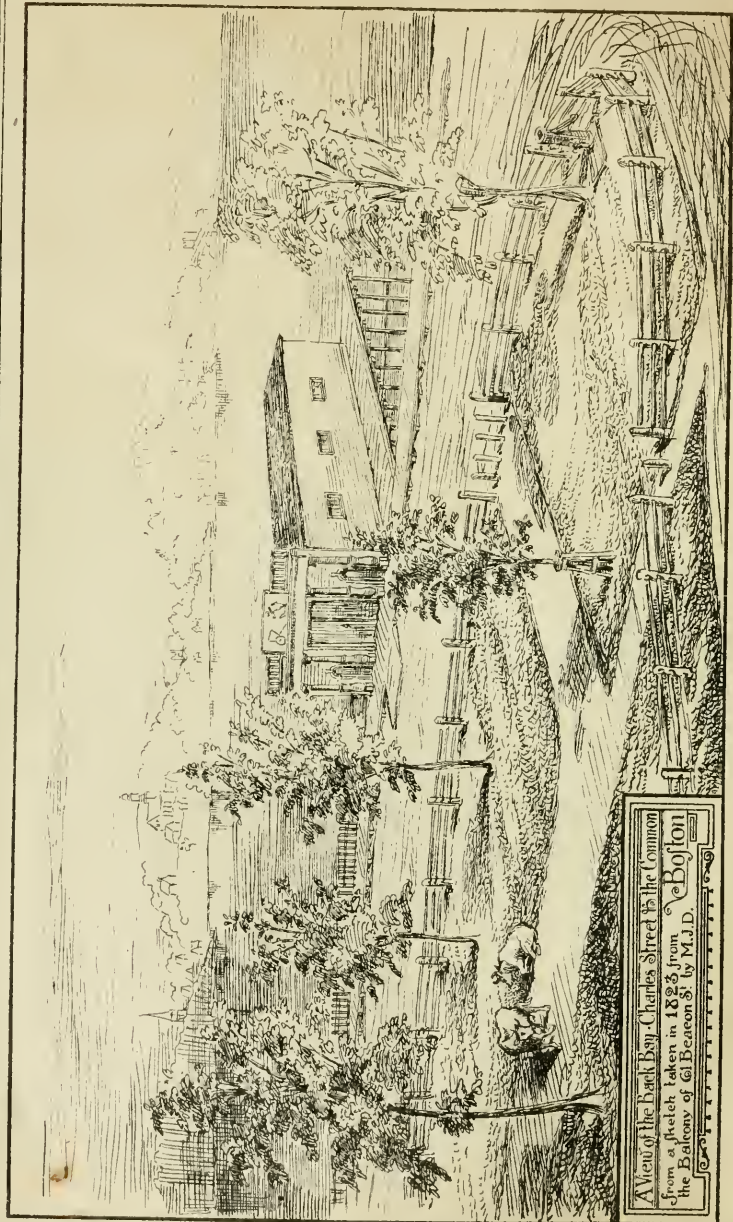


A · LETTER ·
FROM · GRAND ·
MAMA · To · The
LITTLE · FOLKS ·

✻ 1880 ✻







A View of the Back Bay - Charles Street is the Common
from a sketch taken in 1823 from
the Balcony of 61 Beacon St. by M.J.D. Boston

1

Old **B**oston

for

Young **E**yes.

1064
—
1280

“Shall we go see the reliques of this town?”

TWELFTH NIGHT, Act III., Scene 3.

Mary J. Peckham



Privately Printed

FOR THE FAIR FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS SOCIETY FOR THE
PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO CHILDREN.

JOHN WILSON AND SON.

1880.

173

62

235

21st

Alma Park.

Jan. 21 26

31

OLD BOSTON

FOR YOUNG EYES.

BOSTON, DEC. 1, 1880.

MY DEAR CHILDREN: —

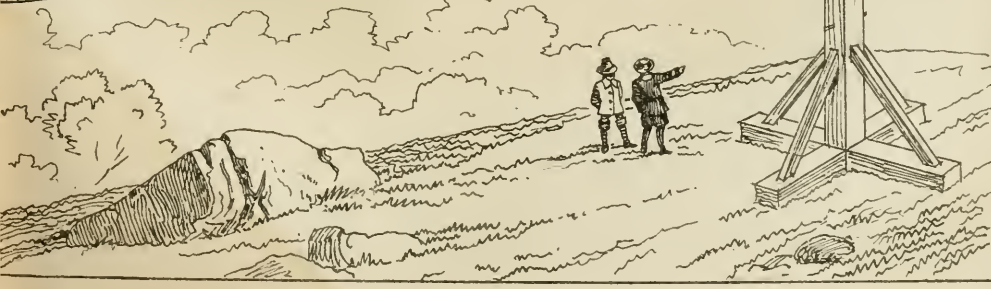
I think it will interest you to hear about Boston in former days; and I shall tell you not only what I myself remember but also what I have heard from still older persons.

Boston was built on a peninsula, — which is a point of land not quite surrounded by water, but connected with the mainland by a narrow neck. This neck is now so built upon and enlarged by filling in the water on either side that you could scarcely discover it, but on it was the road leading to Roxbury, which is now called Washington Street. You could see the water on both sides of the road in my youth, — the ocean on one side, and Charles River on the other. The Indians called this peninsula Shaw-

mut. The first white settler was William Blackstone, and he sold his claim to the whole land for £30, or \$150. I have drawn for you a little map, which will give you some idea of this pear-shaped peninsula. There were three hills upon it, and it was sometimes called Trimountain. Those hills were Copps Hill, where still an old graveyard may be seen; Fort Hill, now almost entirely levelled; and Beacon Hill. Copps Hill is almost opposite Charlestown. The remains of many fine houses are here, for it was once a fashionable part of the town. In Salem Street stands Christ Church, the oldest church in Boston, built in 1723. In the steeple of this church the lanterns were hung to give warning to Paul Revere that the British were about to march to Lexington and Concord. He was booted and spurred, and immediately mounted his good steed, and took the famous ride of which you have read, to rouse the country people and give warning of the approach of the troops. The town was settled principally by English people, and they called it from St. Botolph's town in Lincolnshire. That got corrupted to Boston, just as in my youth they would call the name Crowninshield, Groundfel. John Winthrop was



Y^e OLD
BEACON
LIGHT
W^{ch}
STOOD
ON Y^e
BEACON
HILL.



the first governor of this new little colony. You will see a statue of him in Court Street. The first colonial governors lived in the Province House. This was on Washington Street, opposite the Old South, far back from the street, a balcony over the front door, from which proclamations were read, and two large oak-trees in front of it. Spacious stables reached into School Street, and the name of Province House Court is still retained there. King's Chapel also recalls colonial times, and the days when Court Street and State Street were Queen Street and King Street. Fanueil Hall (now altered) and the Old State House and the Old South Church are all memorials of those days before the Revolution, — older than the memory of living people.

On Beacon Hill, where the reservoir for water now stands, there was a tall mast placed on cross timbers with a stone foundation. It was ascended by tree-nails, and sixty-five feet from the base there was a crane, from which an iron basket was suspended to receive a barrel of tar and tow. This was to be lighted to give notice to the surrounding country of an attack from the Indians, or any danger to the little settlement.

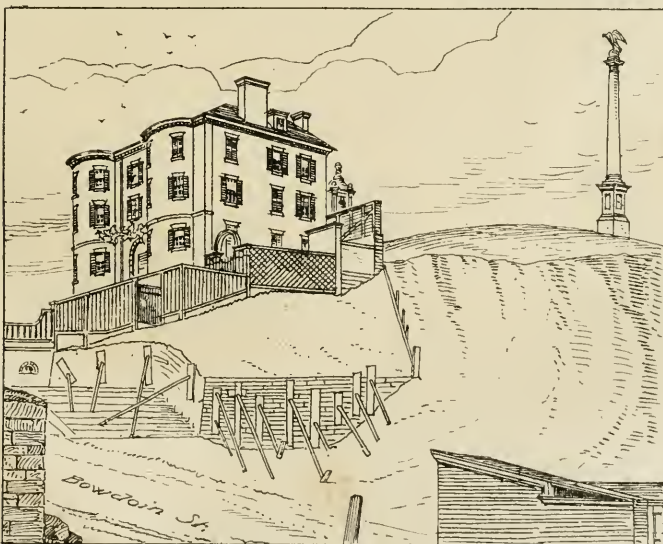
In 1790, a monument of brick was erected on the same spot, an eagle with out-stretched wings being on the top, in commemoration of the battle of Bunker Hill. It was sixty feet high, and you reached it by ascending the flight of steps from Derne Street, just as you see in my little picture. And here is Mr. Thurston's house, too, on the top of the hill. In 1811, this monument was taken down, and the hill levelled. The stone panels on the sides are still to be seen in the State House. On one side you read this inscription:—

AMERICANS !

WHILE FROM THIS EMINENCE SCENES OF
LUXURIANT FERTILITY,
OF FLOURISHING COMMERCE, AND THE ABODES OF
SOCIAL HAPPINESS MEET YOUR VIEW, FORGET
NOT THOSE WHO BY THEIR EXERTIONS
HAVE SECURED TO YOU THESE
BLESSINGS.

The State House was built in 1798, from plans of Mr. Charles Bulfinch. On the opposite corner from the State House, on Park Street, stood the Workhouse, then a Poor-house and Bridewell, down to the Granary, which stood where Park Street Church now is. From Park Street to

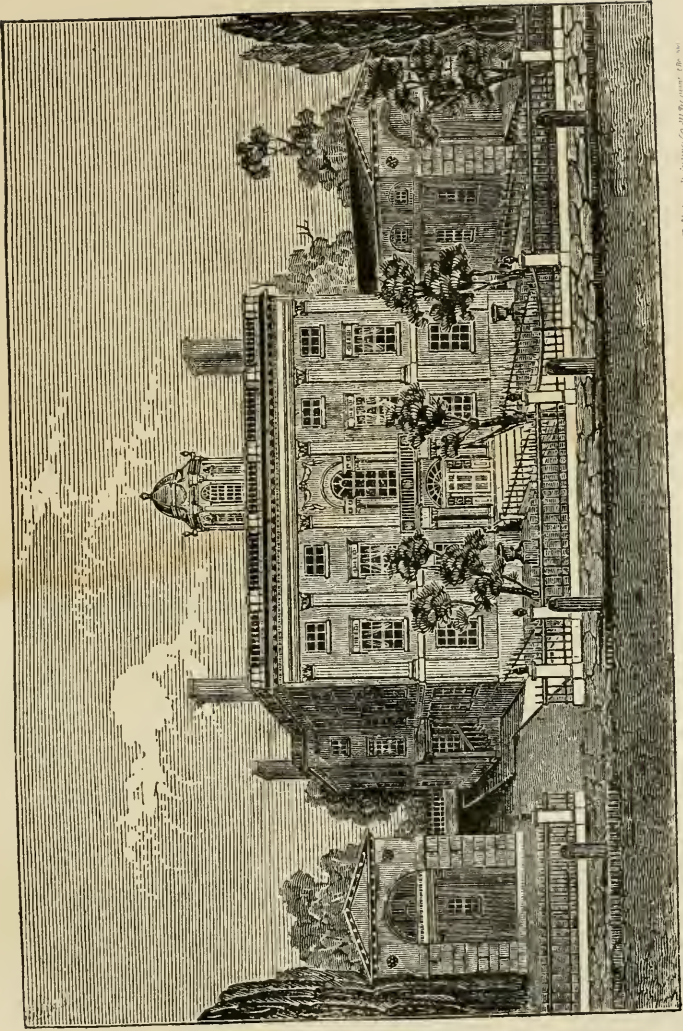
View of BEACON HILL,
From Temple & Derne Sts.
From a drawing
Made in 1811.



View of BEACON HILL, with Mr. Wm. Thurston's House.

Somerfet Street, on the upper fide, was a row of large, fquare, detached houfes, with high fteps and gardens, far back from the freet. Mr. D. D. Rogers's manfion was on the corner, and fo on till you came to the largeft and fineft of all, Mr. Gardiner Greene's, with terraces, a lofty fummer-houfe, and fine grounds, coach-houfe, and gardens with high box borders. This was nearly where now is Pemberton Square. An Eaft India tree called the jingo-tree, tranfplanted from this garden, may ftill be feen with its fan-fhaped leaves on the Beacon Street fide of the Common. Thefe large, fquare houfes were much alike; and the one which I fhew you in the picture, though it flood in Salem, was a good example of the prevailing fyle. Where the brick church in Somerfet Street now ftands was Mr. Caleb Loring's, a little raifed above the freet, with a garden at the fide and back. Direftly oppofite King's Chapel, at the corner of Beacon and Tremont Streets, I remember Mr. Eliot's, fet back from the freet, with a flagged walk leading to the door. Where the Revere Houfe now is was Mr. Boott's, and on the corner of Chardon Street, Mr. Jofeph

Coolidge's, with tall poplar trees in front, and next it, Rev. Francis Parkman's. Where Hovey's store now is, fifty years ago was Mr. S. P. Gardner's house, with gambrel roof and dormer windows, a paved court-yard in front, and a large garden producing delicious pears. Nearly opposite was Mr. Pratt's, one of the square houses again, with large rooms on each side of the front door. On the corner of Bedford and Summer Streets stood the New South Church, on what was called the Church Green. This was taken down in 1868. Almost opposite was Mr. Sturgis's, and the house occupied by George Bancroft, the historian, when he was Collector of the Port of Boston. Through the whole length of this street were fine trees overarching the pavement. In Pearl Street there were many fine square houses. In 1810, Park Street Church was built, and the owners of the large houses above it, Dr. J. C. Warren, Mr. Arnold Welles, and others, used to congratulate themselves on their unbroken view of the sunset over the water from the Common,—now, alas! entirely gone. I well remember that where St. Paul's Church now stands, on Tremont Street, there was an open space, with a high



The Holkham Printing Co. M. B. 1850

wooden fence around it, filled with large trees. It was lighted at night, and people went there to stroll about, to swing, and take refreshments. It was called the Washington Garden. Farther south, on Tremont Street, in the row of houses called Colonnade Row, lived the Lawrences, Mafons, Reveres, and others. From the balcony of one of these houses I saw the entrance of Lafayette into Boston in 1824, and the old Frenchman standing in his barouche, waving his hand and bowing to the multitude, who showered him with flowers.

I was present at the laying of the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill Monument, in 1825. Lafayette sat among the veterans of the Revolution. Rev. Joseph Thaxter (the chaplain of Prescott's own regiment) opened the services with a tremulous and touching prayer. When Mr. Webster rose to address the sea of faces on the open hillside before him, you could think of nothing but Olympian Jove, so noble and grand was his whole bearing, so thrilling and exciting his words. You can read this brilliant speech in his works; but I can never forget having heard it.

Since I have given you some of my youthful experiences, you may like to know that the first thing I distinctly remember in my childhood is the funeral of Lawrence. He was killed in a naval battle between the Shannon and Chesapeake, in Salem harbor. The mournful pageant affected me strongly, and has left an indelible impression. The tolling bells, the awe-struck people, the car with its gloomy trappings, the mourning for this national sorrow, I can never forget. *Sixty* years after, I saw the monument erected to this hero in Trinity Church-yard, in New York. You may have read that he was mortally wounded early in the encounter, and his dying words as he was taken below were: "Don't give up the ship."

Now to return to the State House. As you went down Beacon Street, the first house that struck your attention was the Hancock House, built of stone, far back from the street, with lilac bushes in front, and a balcony over the front door. A hall, built of wood, forty feet in length, was at the back, for grand occasions. My little picture will give you an idea of the front of the house.



From Governor Hancock's house, on Beacon Street, as you descend the hill, at the corner of Joy Street, far back from the street, stood the Joy house, painted yellow, with terraces and high box borders leading up to it. The Harrison Gray Otis house still remains unchanged, only it had a very large garden extending through to Chestnut Street, and a weeping willow could be seen on Chestnut Street. This is now 45 Beacon Street.

I think I must give you young people a peep at the interior of some of these houses, and their stately and gracious occupants. For where can

you now see such courtly and lovely dames, and such noble and grand men, of what is called the old school? They have come down to us in the portraits of Copley, Smibert, and Gilbert Stuart. There was much wealth and display. The rich brocade dresses, the silver and the glass, the convex mirrors, and the carved sideboards are still our precious heirlooms. There was much etiquette and decorum. I have heard from my mother that children were not allowed to taste the water at table until they looked round and bowed, and said, "Duty to papa and mamma, love to brothers and sisters, respects to friends." What would you young people say to this? I fear you would rather be thirsty.

The style of dress was elegant. Gentlemen in full dress wore small-clothes and silk stockings, a queue in their back hair (unless they wore a wig), and delicate, plaited linen-cambric ruffles for their shirt front. Young ladies in society wore only simple muslin. If they were so rich as to have an India mull muslin, they often embroidered it with their own hands, and were supremely rich if they could have a dotted muslin, — sometimes gold or silver dots. A tucker falling over the low neck, and a simple

fash completed their toilette. They often made their own slippers with a last and awl and waxed ends. The mothers wore rich velvet or satin. I well remember a purple velvet dress with gold embroidery and a long train, a delicate golden turban, and a bird of paradise feather. A full set of pearl ornaments, made up in clusters or stars, with connecting chains of pearls, worn on the low neck, completed the attire. At evening entertainments, supper-tables were rare, but the refreshments were passed round to the guests on trays; the waiters dodging and twisting in and out among the company, with their glasses of lemonade or sangaree, and sometimes with empty plates, which you were expected to hold till something came to put upon them.

I must describe two houses to you which I thought very elegant. In one you entered a circular hall, with a statue of Hebe in the centre on a pedestal, and quite open to the roof, with circular galleries running round the three stories. When lighted with wax candles (for gas had never been heard of), and hung with garlands of flowers for a ball, it was very beautiful. This house was on Beacon Street, built in connection with the one

on the corner of Walnut, occupied by Mr. Homer. It was long called Cotton's Folly, and was finally taken down because the glass roof made it so cold. Another, on Chestnut Street, had a suite of rooms which was very imposing to me. You entered an oval hall, surrounded with statues, and with busts over the doors. Ascending the stairs, you were announced; and found yourself in a drawing-room which occupied the whole front of the house, furnished with yellow and purple satin hangings and chairs, and mirrors and candelabra, and a rich carpet with centre medallion; opening from this, a music room, with fine oil paintings covering the walls entirely; then a boudoir, with yellow silk plaited from top to bottom (which I am told has again come in fashion); mirrors and statues abounded; then a French chamber, a blue boudoir, and another room still, — in all, a series of six communicating rooms. Is there any thing more beautiful in these modern days?

In many of these fine private houses the rooms were large, lofty, and palatial, and sometimes hung with papers which have again come in fashion, and are now called Morris papers. Many persons kept their own coaches. Some were very gorgeous, painted yellow or scarlet,

with the coat of arms painted on the panels. I remember seeing a lady step into one of these fine high equipages, dressed in a brilliant green satin pelisse trimmed with ermine, and a white hat with nodding plumes, and it impressed my youthful eye. The coachman, black and liveried, mounted on a high seat in front, with a fringed hammer cloth, and the footman (also liveried) assisting my lady, and then vaulting to his high perch at the back.

The mode of travelling was quite unlike the present day,—stage-coaches, and turnpike roads, which ran in a perfectly straight line from place to place. People often made journeys in their own carriages. It took four days with a good pair of horses to reach Portland from Boston. First you went over Charlestown bridge and along the dreary, marshy Salem turnpike. On one of these swampy islets I once saw a seal, which plunged into the water at our approach. Then you came to the half-way house, on a small island, with a stunted tree or two; then on to the floating bridge at Lynn, where the water splashed through the cracks as you passed; then to a rough, rocky, wild country, reminding one of the Highlands of Scotland. In the outskirts of

Salem, under a hill, was a row of low negro huts, as though the colored people were unfit to live within the pale of civilization. The first night was spent at Ipswich or Newburyport, the second at Portsmouth, the third at Kennebunk, and on the fourth you managed to reach Portland. I have an old journal describing one of these carriage journeys, and saying there was a good public house at Framingham, and it was an excellent place to pass the night, — twenty miles from Boston. As late as 1831, I made a journey to Pittsburg, and you may see how it was done by these extracts from my journal:—

Extract from my journal as late as 1831.

Rose at 5 A.M., Monday, and took the stage for Providence, where we arrived at 12; took the steamer Washington, and after a very rough night reached New York at 10 next morning. A steamer to S. Amboy, where we found a railroad. At New Brunswick we took the stage again, — nine coach-loads to Trenton, — then a steamboat to Philadelphia, which we reached at 7 Tuesday evening. Left Philadelphia at 5 A.M. in boat to Delaware City; there took canal-boat. Thousands of little dead fish on the water, killed by copper ore. At Chesapeake City took steamer Carrollton and arrived at Baltimore at 6. Commenced our stage journey 27th September. An accident had happened the previous day, and, as we

had the same driver, we were beset with inquiries about it. The front straps broke, the stage fell, and the horses ran and dragged the driver, but were stopped by some travellers. One of the outside passengers had his leg broken. Spent the night at Gettysburg. On leaving Chamberburg began very slowly to ascend Cove Mountain. You constantly pass large and heavy wagons with six horses wearing bells on their necks, and droves of cattle, — 300 in each. They said 50,000 head were driven on this road in a year. Rose at 3, and were off again. Found one of the trees between the wheels was broken, and we could not proceed. Sent back for a stage, and passed the night on the wagoner's beds in a wretched house. We were five days crossing the Alleghanies. Our road lay near the river, — very rough and a very dark night. Soon it began to pour, with sharp flashes of lightning. Those near the windows were drenched, and at last the rain began to come in at the top. The wind was so high that they could not keep the lamps lighted. In the morning they had to bore holes through the bottom of the stage to let out the water.

Most of the cotton cloth used in my childhood was imported from the East Indies or Europe. There were very few manufactories here. Flax was raised in the country, and carded, spun, and woven in private homes. Canvas for sails, and duck were made here in manufactories, as early as 1792. Wool was also made into cloth in looms at home. I had a plaid blanket

myself, of gray and white, made by the kind hands of a dear relative, who raised the lambs, carded, spun, and *wove* it herself from the undyed wool; and I have also both bed and table linen, made by her own hands. Our snow-storms were very severe. When there was a drift, the snow would reach to the second-story windows, and an archway had to be dug from the front door to the street. I remember Rev. John Pierpont being dug out in this way, and walking in full canonicals and a cloak to church, and giving the whole morning service to *three* worshippers, but he wisely gave them notice that there would be no second service. Children were expected to go to church in procession behind their parents, in pairs, according to age, and no excuse or headache was allowed for non-attendance at both morning and afternoon services. But what a reverence and awe there was for the clergy in those days! A sacred halo seemed to surround them. They were scarcely human to our eyes. Though the minister might roll his eyes round the church in prayer as though he counted the people, and though we knew the prayer by heart without understanding a word of it, yet he stood there to tell us of holy things, and we adored him. When he

came home to dinner in cloak and shovel-hat, and laid his white bands smoothly in the big family Bible, we looked on with solemnity. When he took his glass of grog before dinner (for the three decanters of old rum, brandy, and gin were on the sideboard for every guest), and, after the blessing, ate, drank, and talked like the rest, we only admired him the more, and wondered that one small head could carry all he knew. At a baptism in the house, when he appeared in flowing robes and cassock and bands and powdered wig, our veneration was unbounded, and one small child was firm in her belief that it was not Dr. —, but her Heavenly Father himself, who had honored them with his presence in their home.

The mode of lighting our rooms was peculiar. Tallow dip candles were often made at home, but the best candles were imported. Oil was used in lamps, but even with great nicety in arranging them, one or two were sure to go out when you had guests, filling the room with an odious smell. Think of the change,—our rooms warmed by an invisible apparatus, and lighted by simply turning a screw!

Lucifer matches were unknown. Well-to-do

people always kept a tinder box, with flint, steel, and punk to kindle a blaze. Wood was our only fuel. We had rousing fires in our sitting-rooms, which made the big bras andirons glitter in the blaze; but it was bitter cold in the corners of the room, and we ran shivering from room to room, for furnaces were unknown. There were tiles around many of the fireplaces. All that I remember were in plain colors, bright-blue, brown, or black, with scenes from Æsop's Fables, or from the Old Testament, or from Bewick's woodcuts. The iron backs behind the fire were often cast with figures upon them. At our own house we had a back with a flower pot filled with tulips cast upon it. I hear these are now in vogue again. The living-room of even wealthy people was usually the dining-room also, because it was well warmed. First a plate-warmer was brought in and placed before the fire, giving notice to the hungry children that one o'clock was drawing nigh. Then the waiter pushed aside the centre table, and spread the crumb cloth, and arranged the table while all the family were sitting round. This was the day, too, when puddings were served before the meat. In the kitchen, in my day, the meat was

roasted on a jack. This was a long spit put through the meat with a pan underneath, and supported on irons at each end, while a long chain hung from a box near the ceiling, which was wound up like a clock and kept the spit slowly turning round and round. Sometimes a little dog was put in a cage like a squirrel cage, and so he kept the meat turning, and if you have read about Whittington, you remember he was set to turn the spit, and afterward became Lord Mayor of London. Our bread was baked in large brick ovens near the fire, into which piles of wood were thrust until it was red-hot ; all small loaves were baked in a bake-kettle, over the fire, with live coals put on the cover. In the broad fireplace was a crane, from which hung the pots and kettles.

Old family domestics were not uncommon. One dear old man lived fifty years in my father's family, first taking him to school in his arms, and then doing the same thing for us,—the children. We always called him Uncle ; and it was my greatest delight at tea to sit in his lap and be fed with little square bits of bread which he cut with his jack-knife and put in his tea. He carried round in his wheelbarrow

the turkeys and geese which were always provided in profusion at Thanksgiving for the poor people, and we loved to assist in this distribution. He was our gardener in his old age, and many were the good things he raised; — delicious large white raspberries and green-gages and long strings of immense currants. Then he planted dandelions, which were much more delicate than those gathered at the roadside. He first introduced tomatoes, or love-apples, as they were called sixty years ago. He had a large asparagus bed raised on a stone coping, and around this he placed stakes at regular intervals, and a lattice-work of rope between, and the fruit was trained on this fence, and the leaves cut off to expose the fruit to the sun on all sides. People came from far to see them, and it was long before they knew how to cook them. Then he had an elegant multiflora rose which was a great curiosity. It covered a southern brick wall, about twenty feet long, and was full of clusters of its tiny roses, — some pale, some bright-pink, and all very beautiful. Another favorite domestic — one of the family, you might say — was our faithful Hannah. She lived thirty years in our family. She was the most scraggy and homely woman I ever met;

but love shone from her wrinkled face, and we called her our dear and beautiful Hannah, and used to put her thimble in the hollow between the neck bones and call it "Swallows' Cave." Where can we now find such faithful friends?

One of the pleasant recollections of my childhood is the being permitted to put the finishing touches to my grandfather's toilette. First a large full white apron was tied around his neck. Then I (mounted on a footstool) would carefully besmear the whole bare head, and the few spare white locks over the ears and at the back of the neck, with a delicate coating of pomatum; then with a powder-puff gently dust it over; then came the difficult process of making (with a corner of the apron) a sharp point directly over the nose, and curved evenly up on both sides; then brush the velvet collar (taking off apron); see that the frilled shirt was nicely arranged; look at the tie of the white neck-cloth; put the gold buckles on the knee-breeches (for he never had a pair of trousers), and look well after the large buckles on the low shoes, that they were fresh and shining; and, finally, bring the gold-headed cane, and put on the hat so that it need not spoil my work. A kiss would reward me for my pains and care.

He was a phyfician, and many times I made bread pills for him to take to patients who *muft* have fomething and needed nothing. His mode of fpeech was antiquated. He would introduce a grandchild, "Mr. —, this is my darter Sukey's darter Sukey." Every gueft partook of the grog on the fideboard always kept in the liquor ftand, and even the man who brought the wood was invited in for a glaſs. He took his own toddy *cold* before dinner, and piping hot as a night-cap at 9 o'clock. Then he went up to his feather bed on a high-poſt bedſtead, hung with full cotton curtains printed with paſtoral ſcenes, and, eſpecially, tall pink ſhepherdeſſes, which were the delight of my eyes. Stuart has preſerved for us his ferene and noble countenance.

Now we will turn to the picture in the beginning of this letter, which I will deſcribe to you. You ſee that the Common is furrounded by a wooden fence, and that cows were kept upon it. A ſtory is told that Madam Hancock, having unexpected company to breakfast, ſent her maids out to the Common to milk her cows. But in my day, a party of ſchool-girls were returning on one of the cow paths from ſchool, when they came upon a cow lying down. One

of the merry ones jumped on her back, when up rose the cow and walked off, the girl clinging to her neck, wild with delight, amid the shouts and laughter of her companions. Observe the pump, which stands in the same corner to this day, only now Cochituate water runs there. The river, you see, comes quite up to Charles Street, where is now the Public Garden. A friend of mine says he recollects that at high tide the water often covered Charles Street, and came up to the foot of the hill on which the soldier's monument stands, and he has often skated there; and a lady tells me that she remembers sitting on that plank walk and fishing for minnows there. The building you see in the picture was a gun-house. Look at the cannon on each side, and the anchor and little gun-carriage on top, just as they were. A company of soldiers called the Sea Fencibles kept their guns here, and boys used to sit on those steps to see them march out. A little lower down, nearer Boylston Street, were rope-walks, and as you passed on the plank sidewalk you could see the men, with coils of hemp round their waists, walking up and down, unwinding it to twist it into rope. The first houses

built on the Mill-dam are those of stone still standing opposite the Public Garden.

You see that Boston *had to grow* as the years went on, and the only way possible was to *make* land, that is, rescue it from the water. So the Mill-dam was built, and a dry basin made, until — oh, marvellous change! Instead of an expanse of water from Charles Street quite out to Roxbury (for you see Dr. Putnam's church in the distance in the picture), we have now the beautiful garden, and street after street of fine houses. Look at Commonwealth Avenue with the noble equestrian statue of Washington looking down it, other statues in the parks, and Trinity Church and the new Old South Church and the Art Museum, and all those fine buildings, where, within my own remembrance, there was only a stretch of water. While thus the new-made portion of the city has changed, the eastern part has changed no less; for from thirty to fifty years ago even Pearl Street, Franklin Street, and Summer Street, and the streets adjoining them, were lined with handsome residences. These were gradually torn down to give place to stores and warehouses, which in turn were burned in the great fire of 1872. Now that there are so many

fine new buildings there, the names of the streets alone remain the same. So you see that during my life Boston has undergone many changes.

But I fear I may weary you if I tell you more of my reminiscences. Old people, you know, like to talk about old times ; and I hope that young people like to hear about them.

Good-by, my dear children,

YOUR LOVING GRANDMAMMA.

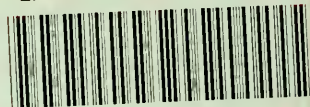
“We will revive those times, and in our memories
Preserve and still keep fresh, like flowers in winter,
Those happier days.”

Denham's "SOPHY."

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